

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 191404Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9834

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7371

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS

SUBJECT: POSITION OF FOREIGN MINISTER STRENGTHENED

1. SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES TELL US THAT POSITION OF FONMIN ABBA EBAN HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY STRENGTHENED AS A RESULT OF THE "BACKLASH" IN ISRAEL FROM THE PUBLICATION IN SEPT 17 ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL EDITION NEWSWEEK THAT HE WAS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE WITH MRS. MEIR AND MIGHT BE REPLACED AS A RESULT OF HIS CRITICISM OF MRS. MEIR'S DECISION TO INTERCEPT THE MEA AIRCRAFT ON AUG 10; THESE SOURCES CLAIM TO BE "SURE" THAT STORY WAS PLANTED WITH

NEWSWEEK BY EBAN'S ENEMIES AND THEY ARE DELIGHTED THAT THE TACTIC HAS BOOMERANGED.

2. SUPPORT FOR EBAN REPORTEDLY HAS COME FROM THE POWERFUL TEL-AVIV-BASED "GUSH FACTION" OF THE LABOR PARTY AND HAS INCLUDED A RECENT PERSONAL INITIATIVE BY FINMIN SAPIR TO EXPRESS PRIVATELY TO MRS. MEIR HIS SUPPORT FOR EBAN'S CONTINUING IN OFFICE AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

3. THE SOURCES ADD THAT LAST FRIDAY, SEPT 14, THE EDITOR OF MAARIV IN AN OFF-THE-RECORD INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MEIR RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT SHE MIGHT CONSIDER REPLACING EBAN AS A RESULT OF DISAGREEMENT OVER THE AUG 10 INCIDENT. MRS. MEIR REPORTEDLY DENIED ANY SUCH INTENTION NOTING THAT SHE HAS HAD AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER DISAGREEMENT WITH ALL OF HER MINISTERS. THE EDITOR ASKED IF HE COULD PUT THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW ON THE RECORD. CONFIDENTIAL

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MRS. MEIR CONCURRED AND IT APPEARED IN MAARIV ON SUNDAY, SEPT 16.

4. WE ARE ALSO TOLD THAT, AFTER LAST SUNDAY'S CABINET MEETING, EBAN AND MRS. MEIR HAD A MEETING DURING WHICH EBAN'S FUTURE WAS DISCUSSED. ONE SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL SAID HE SAW EBAN IM-

MEDIATELY AFTER THIS MEETING AND EBAN MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE AND MRS. MEIR HAD HAD A GOOD DISCUSSION AND THAT HE EXPECTED TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR QUITE A WHILE YET.

5. COMMENT. WE ASSUME THAT MFA WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT SECRETARY-DESIGNATE AWARE THAT HE WOULD NOT BE MEETING WITH LAMEDUCK NEXT MONTH, BUT FOREIGN MINISTER WHO WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY.  
KEATING

CONFIDENTIAL

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